



Montgomery County Forest Conservation Advisory Committee

April 30, 2010

The Honorable Nancy Floreen
Council President
& Members of the Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

RE: Montgomery County Street Tree Planting and Maintenance Budget

Dear Council President Floreen and Members of the Council:

Our committee has written on several occasions to ask for preservation of the county's funding for the street tree program. We are writing again to emphasize the importance of this program.

Montgomery County's (MOCO) has approximately 425,000 trees in its rights-of-way, excluding trees located along agricultural reserve and rustic roads. These trees are a valuable resource providing beauty, shade, stormwater mitigation, traffic calming, carbon sequestration and countless other benefits. Equally important, these trees are seen by tens of thousands of residents every day and as such represent a powerful symbol of the County's commitment to the environment and its people.

FY 2010's budget for right-of-way trees was approximately \$2.0M for pruning (through the CIP), \$2.3M for removals, and \$250,000 for planting. Proposed reductions for FY 2011 are: 87% for pruning (\$250,000); 55% for removals (\$1.0M); and, 60% for planting (\$100,000).

Even using the county's FY 2010 budget, there is inadequate funding to maintain a resource of 425,000 trees. For example, street trees have a mortality rate of roughly 3% each year, representing 12,000 removals. Under the proposed budget this translates into \$80.00 per removal, which is simply unrealistic given that the average cost to remove a tree is \$1000.00. Regarding tree planting, each year the county receives 1,750 resident requests to plant, and there are approximately 30,000 documented planting spaces -- but the actual number is far greater. At a cost of \$150 per tree, simply meeting the demand of 1,750 trees would cost \$265,000/annum. To fully stock the rights-of-way by planting the known figure of 30,000 trees would require an investment of \$4.5M, and this does not include annual mortality. The message is clear: ***Montgomery County's right-of-way trees, so valued by county residents, are not being maintained nor replaced at a reasonable rate.***

A pril 30, 2010

Montgomery County Forest Conservation Advisory Committee

To summarize, the significant proposed reductions for FY 2011 for tree pruning and removals will expose Montgomery County to claims and complaints due to damaged property from limbs and entire trees falling into adjacent public and private spaces. Regarding the loss of planting dollars, consider the following: Tree planting is one of the least expensive and most powerful ways to engage County residents. People understand the benefits trees bring to their neighborhoods – this builds tremendous good will, even when other budget pressures seem insurmountable.

It is for these reasons that we ask you to consider at minimum to restore FY 2010's tree maintenance budgets to the Montgomery County Department of Transportation for FY 2011.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

/s/ Caren Madsen

Chair, Montgomery County Forest Conservation Advisory Committee

Cc: Councilmember Berliner
Councilmember Leventhal
Art Holmes, DOT
Bob Hoyt, DEP